

Approved For Release 2000/08/29 : CIA-RDP79R00890A000600050018-7
NSC BRIEFING 18 OCTOBER 1955

SOUTH VIETNAM

I. In referendum on 23 October, people of South Vietnam will be presented a ballot made of two halves:

- A. On one half will be a portrait of Diem, as heroic leader of throng marching toward independence, with inscription "I depose Bao Dai and recognize Diem as chief of state with mission to install democratic regime."
- B. On other half will be portrait ^{of} Bao Dai in solitary splendor and Mandarin robes, inscribed "I do not depose Bao Dai and do not recognize Diem."
- C. Voters will tear off half they favor, drop it in ballot box.

II. Heavy majority for Diem considered foregone conclusion.

- A. Government busily putting up anti-Bao Dai posters, organizing meetings to pass anti-Bao Dai resolutions.
- B. But Hanoi radio has ridiculed referendum; asked people to ignore it.

III. In what may be last official act, Bao Dai on 18 October "fired" Diem--announcing "full power given Roman Catholic premier has been cancelled."

- A. This act unlikely to be taken seriously by anyone except coterie of Vietnamese "outs" in France and possibly various foreign protocol chiefs who must devise procedure to take account of changed situation.

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B. Earlier, referring to the 23 Oct referendum, Bao Dai had appealed to Britain, France, US, India and USSR not to encourage or support "a governmental activity which responds neither to deep sentiment of Vietnamese people nor to common cause of peace."

C. Bao Dai's attack included a call for closer North-South co-operation, suggesting that the Emperor may hope that the Viet Minh might eventually find him useful in some role pertaining to unification.

IV. Diem's referendum on Bao Dai is first step of 3-stage program to put his government on a solid, legal and popular base.

A. Next step, tentatively set for 27 November, is a referendum on a Vietnamese constitution (now being drafted under Diem's supervision) and the simultaneous election of municipal and provincial councils.

B. Final step is election of a national assembly--possibly as soon as December, but more likely sometime later.

1. Means of electing the assembly--directly or indirectly--not yet determined, but on this point (as well as in drafting proposed constitution) Diem will take all precautions to preserve his control.

V. Diem's program to put a base under his government is designed both to silence internal critics of one-man rule and to parry international pressure for observance of Geneva unification schedule.

A. Diem argues only a representative assembly is competent to pass on the issue of nationwide elections.